



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Eye Disease Rates May Soon Follow Upward Trend of Diabetes

Regular Eye Testing May Help Reduce Risks of Blindness

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The dramatic rise of diabetes in Utah over the past two decades has led to an increase of diabetes related vision loss.

At least seven out of ten people with type 1 diabetes will develop diabetic eye disease within 20 years of being diagnosed. As many as one in five people with type 2 diabetes may already have an eye disease when their diabetes is first diagnosed. The majority of people with type 2 will eventually develop mild to severe problems.

"The longer a person has diabetes, the more they are at risk of developing diabetes-related eye diseases such as cataracts, retinopathy, and possibly glaucoma," said Robert Christiansen, MD.

"Diabetes currently accounts for eight percent of all blindness in the United States, and is the leading cause of new blindness among adults ages 20 to 74," said Brenda Bodily, Utah Diabetes Prevention and Control Program Information Specialist.

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Page 2 of 2 - Eye Disease Rates May Soon Follow Upward Trend of Diabetes

Diabetic Retinopathy, the most devastating diabetes-related eye disease, may affect as many as 35,000 Utahns. Retinopathy can be mild to severe, with minimal vision loss to total blindness.

Despite the added eye disease risks, people with diabetes can help reduce their risk by controlling their blood sugar. In the groundbreaking Diabetes Control and Complications Trial, which ended in 1993, participants who kept their blood sugar in control, reduced their risk of diabetes related eye disease by as much as 76 percent.

"Detecting diabetes-related eye disease early would greatly reduce the risk of blindness and its devastating consequences for people with the disease," said Christiansen.

The Utah Department of Health Diabetes Prevention and Control Program strongly encourages anyone with diabetes or who is at risk for diabetes to get an annual eye exam.

For more information on diabetic eye disease or controlling your diabetes, contact your doctor, or call the Utah Department of Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542 and visit www.health.utah.gov/diabetes.

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